



PATRIC CHAUVEY, SONY PICTURES CLASSICS, 2003

Uninterrupted Dialogue

With the wind.

WINGED MIGRATION: Directed by Jacques Perrin, with Jacques Cluzaud, Michel Debats. Narrator, Jacques Perrin. Written by Perrin and Stephane Durand. Produced by Perrin and Christophe Barratier. Executive producer, Jean De Trégomain. Cinematographers, Michael Benjamin, Sylvie Carcedo-Dreujou, Laurent Charbonnier, Luc Drion, Laurent Fleutot, Philippe Garguil, Dominique Gentil, Bernard Lutic, Thierry Machado, Stéphane Martin, Fabrice Moindrot, Ernst Sasse, Michael Terrasse, Thierry Thomas. Composer, Bruno Coulais. Editor, Marie-Joséphe Yoyotte. Production design, Regis Nicolino. Idea Valentine Perrin. Sony Pictures Classics, 2003. G. 89 minutes.

Jacques Perrin played many roles to create this elegant, moving documentary feature about the wonders of birds in flight: director, narrator, writer and producer. In a lengthy filmmaking career that includes both acting and producing, Perrin (*Microcosmos* and *Himalaya* producer) has won many awards. But to make this Academy Award nominee, he assembled five crews of more than 450 people. The crews included 17 pilots, who flew traditional and remote-controlled model gliders, model and standard helicopters, balloons, delta-wing gliders and a specially designed ultralight motorized aircraft that put its awed human operators in the air with the migrating birds. Fourteen cinematographers flew next to, above, below and in front of the birds.

The result is magical. Perrin: "For 80 million years, birds have ruled the skies, seas and earth. Each spring, they fly vast distances. Each fall, they fly back on the same route. This film is the result of four years following their amazing odysseys, in the northern hemisphere and then the south, species by species, flying over seas and continents."

Image, movement and sound make this a memorable seven-continent excursion into the specialized world of flight. Silent cameras capture breathtaking pictures, while recordings of the actual sounds birds make while flying speak to the intense collaboration between technology, dedicated cinematographers and savvy pilots. Amazingly, the birds accept the winged humans who accompany them, often at the dizzying heights of 10,000 feet.

We learn early that birds migrate, but this film delivers the information in crystalline, sensory detail. By the end, the reality of the birds' incredible feats is more than fact: It is a poem, a symphony, a celebration.

[Read this section later if you have not yet

seen the picture.] Even though no special effects were used, the filmmakers fudged some shots. James Gorman interviewed Perrin for *The New York Times* (4/15/03) and reported that the scene of Canadian hunters shooting snow geese was real, but images of falling birds "were actually birds doing excited acrobats as they came in to land." Gunshots were added later. In the Eastern European industrial pollution sequence, the filmmakers constructed the set where the birds walked through oil, which was actually colored milk. Gorman also reported that in the scene of crabs feeding, they were actually eating a piece of fish, not a baby chick.

As a film viewer, I appreciate knowing about tricks of the trade, but knowledge doesn't dilute my appreciation for the quality of *Winged Migrations*. Purists may object to any staging and say the film is a nature feature, not a documentary. Similar controversy has swirled around Edward Curtis's magnificent photographs of Native Americans for years, because he staged many of the portraits. But in both cases, nothing that did not occur naturally was filmed. If Perrin or Curtis staged an artificial scene, one that never takes place, it would be different. Curtis documented the end of a way of life and Perrin the everyday violence of nature and man, which decimates flocks of migrating birds. As Perrin makes clear, migration is about survival.

A renewed appreciation for the avian creatures who share with us this beautiful planet requires their names: puffin, guillemot, northern gannet, barnacle geese, red-crowned crane, whooper swan, sandhill crane, sage grouse, Western grebe, pelican, wader, Canada geese, snow geese, European white stork, greylag geese, bald eagle, albatross, penguin, starling, aigrette, darter, jacaba, European turtle-dove, Eurasian crane, flamingo, secretary bird, hornbill, great bustard, black-necked swan, robin, snowy owl, great Skua, arctic tern, great northern diver, eider duck, great white pelican, pigeon, bar-headed geese, Andean condor, jacana, egret, wood pigeon, macaw, black-headed ibis, sparrow.

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THE MEDALLION* (PG-13) 11:20, 2:05, 4:35, 7:45, 10:15	AMERICAN WEDDING* (R) 1:25, 4:05, 7:20, 8:00, 10:00, 10:40
MARCI X* (R) 1:35, 4:00, 7:10, 9:35	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN (PG-13) 11:40, 12:10, 3:05, 3:35, 7:00, 7:30, 10:25 10:50
MY BOSS'S DAUGHTER* (PG-13) 12:05, 2:35, 4:55, 7:35, 9:50	LAURA COFT: TOMB RAIDER: CRADLE OF LIFE (PG-13) 1:15 4:10, 7:05, 10:05
FREDDY VS JASON *(R) 11:35, 1:30, 2:20, 4:15, 5:00, 7:15, 7:55, 9:55, 10:35	SPY KIDS 3-D: GAME OVER (PG) 11:10, 1:45, 4:20,
OPEN RANGE*(R) 11:50, 3:10, 7:00, 10:20	SEABISCUIT (PG-13) 12:00, 3:25, 7:20, 10:45
GRIND* (PG-13) 7:25, 10:30	FINDING NEMO (G) 11:15, 2:30, 5:10
UPTOWN GIRLS* (PG-13) 11:25, 2:10, 4:40, 7:40 10:15	
S.W.A.T. (PG-13) 12:35, 3:30, 7:10, 7:50, 10:10, 10:50	
FREAKY FRIDAY (PG) 11:45, 1:05, 2:25, 3:55, 5:05, 7:05, 9:45	* NO PASSES OR SUPERSAVERS

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ANGER MANAGEMENT (PG-13) 12:05, 2:35, 5:10, 7:35, 10:15	HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE (PG-13) 11:25, 2:15, 5:00, 7:45, 10:25
BRUCE ALMIGHTY (PG-13) 11:40, 2:20, 4:50, 7:30, 10:05	LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN (PG-13) 11:30, 2:05, 4:35, 7:10, 9:45
CHICAGO (PG-13) 9:15	RUGRATS GO WILD (PG) 11:50, 2:00, 4:40, 7:00
DADDY DAY CARE (PG) 11:55, 2:30, 4:55, 7:15, 9:40	2 FAST 2 FURIOUS (PG-13) 11:20, 4:45, 10:10
HOLES (PG) 2:00, 7:25	
JOHNNY ENGLISH (PG) 12:20, 2:40, 5:15, 7:50, 10:00	
LEGALLY BLOND 2 (PG-13) 11:35, 2:10, 4:30, 7:05, 9:35	
THE HULK (PG-13) 12:25, 3:30, 6:45, 9:50	

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OPEN RANGE (R) - ID REQ'D DIG ✓ (1145 255) 705 1010	
UPTOWN GIRLS (PG-13) DIG ✓ (1155 220 445) 720 940	
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GRIND (PG-13) DIG ✓ (1245 305)	
UPTOWN GIRLS (PG-13) DIG ✓ (1215 235 450) 705 920	
S.W.A.T. (PG-13) DIG (140 420) 700 940	
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FREAKY FRIDAY - PG 1:50 4:05 6:20 8:30

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***OPEN RANGE - R** 2:20 5:25 8:30
***UPTOWN GIRLS - PG-13** 2:00 4:20 6:30 8:40
***GRIND - PG-13** 7:00
S.W.A.T. - PG-13 1:45 4:30 9:20
AMERICAN WEDDING - R 7:30 9:40
LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE CRADLE OF LIFE - PG-13 1:10 4:10 6:50 9:30
SEABISCUIT - PG-13 12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN - PG-13 12:10 3:10 6:10 9:10
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